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Strangers, Spirits and Land Reforms: conflicts about land in Dande, northern Zimbabwe by MARJA J. SPIERENBURG Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2004. Pp. 255, US\$39.00.

JOOST FONTEIN

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Reviews

An African Peace Process: Mandela, South Africa and Burundi by

KRISTINA A. BENTLEY and ROGER SOUTHALL

Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005. Pp. 220, £18.50 (pbk.).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06211960

The authors state a modest aim: explaining South Africa's role in the Burundi peace process to a South African audience, which knows little about Burundi. I disagree with them when they say that their book 'is unlikely to satisfy regional specialists'; to the contrary, it is a very welcome contribution to our understanding of a complex and lengthy process that has been largely left under-researched.

The Burundian case has shown that the international community can exercise leverage to achieve political solutions. The regional leaders and South Africa have played a major role in forcing the Burundian political and military players into finding an accommodation that would not have been achieved without considerable pressure. Indeed, on several occasions, the region put Burundi under a *de facto* trusteeship and imposed solutions. This started with the adoption of the Arusha peace accord in 2000, when Nelson Mandela forced the hand of very reluctant Tutsi parties. Despite strong resistance from the same Tutsi parties and the Burundian army, a force of the African Union under South African leadership was deployed. Attempts to reject the draft interim constitution by the Tutsi parties and, subsequently, to amend the text by President Ndayizeye were resisted by the regional leaders, who also rejected calls for the postponement of the electoral process. The wider international community has supported the regional 'Burundi Peace Initiative', e.g. by offering financial and diplomatic backing and by turning the AU force into a UN one, but consistently subcontracted leadership to the region.

What was in it for South Africa? The authors argue that, while the concern was to some extent humanitarian, it is in South Africa's own interest to achieve peace throughout the continent, and in particular in Central Africa where it is increasingly committed politically, militarily and economically. But Mandela's personal role went well beyond his country's national interest. While he reluctantly took over as mediator after Julius Nyerere died, once involved he was very hands-on, impatient and outspoken. He got away with it thanks to his charisma and skills, and no-one else could probably have achieved what he did in such a short time – from December 1999 to August 2000, when the Arusha peace accord was signed. In order to make it work, he twisted the arm of a cautious Thabo Mbeki and the reluctant South African military: the deployment of a peace-keeping force under robust South African leadership was one of the cornerstones of the implementation of the accord. During the five years it took to conclude the transition, South Africa, through Vice-President Jacob Zuma (who succeeded Mandela as mediator), remained a major driving force in synergy with the regional leaders.

Although one need not to agree with every detail, this book offers an excellent insight into the dynamics of the peace process and a useful analysis of the role played by international, regional and Burundian players. The latter could certainly have been more present in this story, which after all is *their* story. The absence of sources in French (alas, a flaw also found in other research on the Great Lakes region) probably accounts to some extent for this absence.

FILIP REYNTJENS
University of Antwerp

Voices of African Women: women's rights in Ghana, Uganda, and Tanzania by JOHANNA BOND

Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2005. Pp. 421, US\$45.00 (pbk.).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06221967

Although its title suggests that this book contains texts by African women about their individual lives, *Voices of African Women* is in fact an informative collection of essays which lists and analyses rights and practices related to women's wellbeing and equality with men in three African countries. The title refers to the fact that the essays are written by Ghanaian, Tanzanian and Ugandan women lawyers and activists. The preface to the collection informs us that the essays were the result of a United States programme in women's rights, the Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship Program. The title suggests a discrepancy between writer (African) and reader/teacher (North American) that, ironically, may reinforce the gap in women's rights that exists across the world and that this volume seeks to address.

In the same way that the title is misleading, so is the goal of the book unclear, other than providing a common platform for writings by women lawyers from various African countries. The introduction to the book, written by the director of the training programme, Johanna Bond, tells us little about the relevance or urgency of the essays, or of the pertinence of the particular comparison of these three countries. Each of the five thematic sections is subdivided into between three and seven single-authored articles. To make up for the lack of a general introduction, these sections are preceded by a comparative introduction by Bond, which sheds light on what comes afterwards, but does not provide a synthesising analysis of the various issues and concerns in the individual chapters. Moreover, the conclusion to the essays is yet another chapter, which opens up a new discussion, this time about National Human Rights Commissions.

Despite this confusing start (and end), the book is useful and essential reading for anyone interested in women's rights in Africa. This has to be the most detailed and up-to-date book on women's rights in this region. The authors describe the rules and practices concerning (1) women's rights to participate in public life; (2) violence against women; (3) the family; (4) reproductive health and HIV/AIDS; and (5) economic empowerment. These five themes cover the relevant problems and practices which, as the authors convincingly show, obstruct women's equality and basic wellbeing, and in doing so, constrain their countries' development, prevent a natural decline in fertility rates, increase the spread of HIV/AIDS, and increase general disease among women and their children (which could have been a good way to introduce the general theme of women's rights in Africa).

The articles have two main merits: first, they show how plural legal systems, in which statutory, customary and religious law compete, are most disadvantageous for women, as they weaken the strength of statutory law, and thus of new, more inclusive legislation. Statutory law was introduced by the British, but colonial rule observed customary and religious law when Africans were concerned. Customary and religious law, often applied in family disputes, including issues regarding violence and sexuality, is highly patriarchal. Here lies the biggest challenge for the studied countries: how can one improve national legislation, i.e. make it more inclusive, if a highly discriminative socio-cultural framework is maintained and supported by the primary courts through customary and religious law?

The second merit is that the articles explain socio-cultural practices that are common to a greater or lesser extent throughout the region: besides a debate about the il/legitimacy of FGM (Adjetey), the authors discuss polygamy (Dwamena-Aboagye), trokosi (Amesika), dowry, child marriage, widow inheritance, and sorote marriage (Sam), mokamona and dry sex (Tungaraza). Practices and rules regarding land inheritance, divorce, property, access to education, representation and economic achievement, are inevitably set in the perspective of socio-cultural discrimination supported by customary law. It is important to be aware of these cultural practices, and many less cultural aberrations grounded in mere disrespect for women, in order to understand fully the nature of the violation of women's rights in Africa. As such, further study is clearly of some urgency. *Voices of African Women* is interesting in that it brings together studies of particular and less particular forms of violation of women's rights in the context of each country's legal system. This makes it a useful reference book for anyone interested in gender and legislation in Tanzania, Ghana or Uganda. However, the collection does not rise above being a detailed account of very similar circumstances with regard to violations and legislation of women's rights.

JELKE BOESTEN
University of Bradford

A Hill Among a Thousand: transformations and ruptures in rural Rwanda by DANIELLE DE LAME, translated by HELEN ARNOLD

Tervuren: RMCA, and Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.
Pp. 540, US\$65.00.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06231963

Based on fieldwork undertaken between 1988 and 1990, de Lame's anthropology of a hillside community in Kibuye prefecture provides a valuable insight into Rwandan rural life during the last gasps of the Second Republic. Her ethnography is of a community that has been historically peripheral to the Rwandan state, and the ways in which it is being transformed by the partial and uneven effects of globalisation and its renegotiated relations to the centre. Her analysis reveals a group of people whose cohesiveness is both sustained and strained through ritual exchange which serves to hide a community increasingly threatened by the individual enrichment of a few and the fight for survival of the many.

In the first part of the book, de Lame focuses on the organisation of time and space and how people's identities have been structured around their relations to the land and the perpetuation of lineages through time. Moving from a situation

where cyclical continuity shaped both space and time, and thus people's relations to each other, this space has become polarised by its relationship to the urban centres and their increasing integration with global political and economic forces. As the centre has increasingly penetrated the local economy, individual household economies have undergone transformations, which have in turn affected the ways in which people relate to the wider community. Whilst for many this has caused a need to create new strategies for survival such as tontines and the maintenance of ties within clientage networks, for those with access to the centre and the money economy it has led to the growth in cosmopolitan values. What is most obvious is the widening gap between the wealthy few who are increasingly engaging in individual accumulation, and the many who were traditionally sustained by the continual flow of surplus through the community. During the time of de Lame's observations, this increasing discrepancy was managed through the choice of the elite to remain partially involved in the symbolic processes of ritual exchange, helping to maintain local stability, whilst at the same time nurturing relations and access to sources of enrichment within the centre.

In the second part of the book, de Lame looks more closely at the ritual exchanges that bind society and enable social reproduction. Three chapters in turn deal with beer, cows and women, their circulation throughout society and the performative constitution of identity around significant changes in these exchanges. Building on the theoretical framework of the first part of the book, the detail in this second part is successful in charting the circulation of these commodities within the community, and how the exchange of gifts and forming of alliances have been forced to change in light of the influence of the centre.

The data and analysis in this book is incredibly detailed and de Lame is successful in her aim of giving a voice to the individuals she studies, rather than drowning them in broad categorisations. Both her rigorous methodological approach and her elegant use of a range of theories makes this important reading for those working within the anthropological field. The book's post-genocide publication unavoidably situates it within the literature that seeks to provide insight into the causes of the genocide, even if most of its fieldwork and analysis was undertaken before the genocide began. The rich anthropological detail and the author's decision to leave the bulk of the text unencumbered by hindsight can make this reading of the text more difficult. At the same time it fulfils an important function. Whereas other commentators frequently allude to factors such as structural problems and a culture of obedience in explaining mass involvement in the genocide, de Lame's analysis of the particular reveals these to be both possible contributory factors, but far more complex than more facile analyses would have us believe. More importantly, although de Lame does situate her observations within growing ethnic tensions, the bulk of her work is largely silent on these issues. Instead, the tension she highlights is the widening economic gap between those semi-cosmopolitan elites and the many struggling to survive. Therefore, in her epilogue, she is forced to rely on a more instrumental view of genocidal involvement. The community she studied had begun to fragment, de-centred by its partial integration into a capitalist mode of production and money economy. For de Lame, this meant it was fertile ground for the manipulation of fear into a bi-polar ethnic register. What this says about the planning of the genocide and its initial stages is minimal. However, the book is an essential

starting point into investigations about why so many were involved in the massacres, and suggests the possibility that in this peripheral region of Rwanda, genocide perhaps became a final strategy for survival.

ALEXANDRA HURST
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An Economic History of South Africa: conquest, discrimination and development by C. H. FEINSTEIN

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. 302, £45.00; £19.99 (pbk.).
doi:10.1017/S0022278X0624196X

This book by the late Charles Feinstein, a former professor of economic history at the University of Oxford, provides the first economic history of South Africa in over 60 years. His survey begins with a description of the country's traditional economic landscape, prior to the first European settlements in 1652, through to the demise of apartheid in the early 1990s. As such, Feinstein sums up both aim and scope of the study: 'The present text is in no sense a report on further original research. The aim is to provide a broad overview of the character, transformation, initial growth, and final decline of South Africa's economy, and my interpretation of the major factors that explain these developments' (p. xviii). In doing so, he emphasises the importance of the discovery of both gold and diamonds for the transformation of the country's economy in the 1870s. By putting South Africa in international perspective, and comparing it with the economic situation in colonial territories in particular, Feinstein highlights why this was so crucial for the country's economic progress for much of the following decade or so. He touches on the central themes pertaining to this period which lasted until the 1970s, and which was marked by almost uninterrupted economic growth. Feinstein also, rather briefly, discusses the impact of the state of the country's economy on the political landscape, especially with regard to President de Klerk's February 1990 policy announcement leading to the end of apartheid. In this context, however, no mention is made of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), both of which, allied with the African National Congress (ANC), were crucial actors in undermining the racial system from within the country. The key question relating to the apartheid period, whether or not this political construct was compatible with a successful economy, is addressed in the final chapter: 'Most other countries strive to raise the quality of their human resources; only South Africa made it an express purpose of official policy to lower standards and frustrate the aspirations of those who wished to improve their contribution to the economy. As long as gold could be mined at a good profit, the economy could carry this burden. Once the gold had gone, the huge costs of irrational discrimination could no longer be sustained' (p. 251). Overall, this is an authoritative work destined for the student in the fields of (South) African economics, history and politics.

ROGER PFISTER
Stellenbosch University

Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid by ADRIAN GUELKE

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. 248, £19.99 (pbk.).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06251966

In re-examining the historical trajectory of South Africa, Adrian Guelke begins by analysing exactly what apartheid represented: Was it segregation? Was it a manifestation of colonialism? Was it a variant form of Nazism? These definitions are important and continue to be controversial, because of 'the role that labels such a Nazi and neo-Nazi still play in political polemic' (p. 39) within the country today. One of the prominent features of South Africa has been the legal institutionalisation of separation over decades. As far back as 1911 a range of laws controlled the movement of, and denied opportunities for, Africans. The Natives Land Act of 1913, for example, made it illegal for Africans to purchase land outside their specified areas, while the Apprenticeship Act of 1922 prevented Africans from being apprenticed. The Immorality Act of 1927 sought to banish sexual relations between Africans and whites, thereby demonstrating, that 'racial discrimination was deeply entrenched in the laws of South Africa well before 1948' (p. 25). In fact, just after the success of the National Party in that year, a debate ensued as to whether apartheid really was a radical new policy or simply a reaffirmation of the old practice of segregation.

Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid identifies the critical year of 1960, the time not only of the massacre at Sharpeville, but a date that also marked the end of colonial rule within the wider African continent as 15 states gained independence. South Africa faced a crisis both economically and domestically. As Guelke explains: 'After Sharpeville it became commonplace to predict that the implementation of apartheid would lead to a racial bloodbath and that South Africa would succumb to revolution, not in the distant future, but given the pace of change elsewhere in Africa, in a matter of years' (p. 106). In the international context of the Cold War and the regional environment of Soviet/Cuban involvement in Angola and Mozambique in the mid-1970s, pressures were mounting on the Nationalist government. But it was not until the 1980s that it became clear that apartheid was facing a real crisis that could not be assuaged by the introduction of a tri-cameral Parliament. With momentous changes occurring on the international scene – political shifts in Eastern Europe and the demise of the USSR – it became clear that fears of a Communist threat were disintegrating and the end of apartheid could be considered. Guelke's analysis of the differing contemporary interpretations and prognoses of various commentators, academics and practitioners is both interesting and instructive. He also considers the role played by sporting boycotts, sanctions and embargoes in creating an environment where change was desirable. Ultimately, of course, in trying to understand the events of the past 'it seems inevitable that perceptions of apartheid in this century will be fundamentally shaped by South Africa's political development during the course of the next decades' (p. 208). *Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid* is a lucid and accessible text that will be invaluable to undergraduates concerned with the political history of South Africa.

HEATHER DEEGAN
Middlesex University

Dilemmas of Weak States: Africa and transnational terrorism in the twenty-first century by TATAH MENTAN

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. 396, £47.50.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06261962

This book is ambitious in scope, it is topical because of state weakness and the threat of terror, and it is based on a wide reading of a variety of literatures, but it offers little that is new or path breaking. There are no new insights about the threat of transnational terrorism in Africa. The author's fundamental conclusion is that 'the wellsprings of terrorism are widespread and deep' (p. 364). Nor does he examine the nature of state weakness in Africa in more than a perfunctory manner.

More positively, Mentan's book contains useful short sketches of a *mélange* of Islamist movements, including those that may operate within South Africa. There are potted histories of colonial Africa, and of the forces that shaped the independent states of Africa. There is a helpful description of Egypt's counter-terrorism strategies. The colonial and post-colonial struggles of the North African nation-states, often excluded from books on Africa, are included. A discussion of the contemporary battles by states against the contending forces of radical Islam is also included. But without a compelling argument about the origins of state weakness or about how state weakness might be remedied, Mentan simply asserts that Africa has weak states, and that those states are prone to being penetrated by international terror. No conditions are specified. No empirical data are presented to justify the bald assertions that Africa, even Muslim Africa (Mentan has an appropriate section on northern Nigeria), will provide rich soil in which terrorism can take root.

For example, the author blandly asserts that 'Very little is known about al Qaeda's and Osama bin Laden's links to the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia and Sudan, but they are well-established and extensive' (p. 301). The first part of the sentence is obviously true. But the second does not follow, and needs to be established and confirmed. Indeed, recent research and analysis suggests al Qaeda's ties to the region are fragmentary, episodic, and hardly strong. A smallish cell of al Qaeda operatives is suspected to be training operatives in Somalia, but there is no conclusive proof (for example, in late 2005, Somaliland arrested six supposed members of al Qaeda). The Sudan might be ripe for penetration, given its status as a failed state and two on-going and one dormant internal insurgencies, but there is little hard evidence of al Qaeda or al Qaeda-friendly operations within today's Sudan.

Furthermore, a compelling counter-factual argument is now being made that terrorists operate more effectively in failed states, where there is still some semblance of a national government and security apparatus, than in a collapsed state such as Somalia, where non-state actors predominate and foreign terrorists always risk being exposed. Corrupted authority is more hospitable than anarchy for terrorists covertly training or in transit.

African leaders must worry about the threat of terror. But they must worry more about how to ensure that their peoples are governed and guided well. Terrorism everywhere thrives on grievances, on income and developmental disparities within countries, and on the abuse of power by regimes and individuals.

Effective counter-terrorism depends on African regimes winning the hearts and minds of their own citizens – a major work in progress.

ROBERT I. ROTBERG
Harvard University

Modernity and the African Cinema: a study in colonialist discourse, postcoloniality, and modern African identities by FEMI OKIREMUETE SHAKA

Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004. Pp. 453, US\$29.95 (pbk.).
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06271969

Although filmmaking by sub-Saharan Africans on their own continent is now in its fifth decade, there are still only a dozen or so theoretical monographs in English on African cinema, and this fact in itself makes Nigerian film theorist Femi Okiremuete Shaka's *Modernity and the African Cinema* a welcome contribution to the field. In addition, he sets out specifically to engage in a critical dialogue with previous theoretical writings on African cinema, thus adding new insights to the field by addressing previously unexplored or neglected areas of study.

As in most critical works on contemporary African cultural practices, the main premise of this study is that the construction of modern African identities is undeniably a product of Euro-African contact, the discursive patterns and institutional practices that it has produced, as well as Africans' responses to them. The study is an attempt to provide sound theoretical frameworks for colonial as well as post-colonial African film criticism, with emphasis on the extent to which colonial film policies and practices have shaped post-colonial African cinema and the modern African identities negotiated and constructed through these cinematic representations.

The study commences with an assessment of modern African identity in order to place in proper historical context the framework within which the cinematic institution developed in Africa. Shaka situates his definition of African cinema within the tradition of an *imagined* African identity, based on detailed analyses of the notions of *Africanness* (as conceptualised by pan-Africanist thinkers); *modernity* (through rethinking it as a developmental concept within the context of African modernity, as opposed to the Eurocentric historical roots of the term in Enlightenment ideals); and *subjectivity* (used in a plural sense to refer to the processes of creative and adaptable identity negotiation taking place in post-colonial African societies). The construction of modern African subjectivities is explored through insightful and compelling re-readings of the theories of Mudimbe, Fanon and Bhabha, providing through his grasp of their theoretical constructs valuable additions to the fields of African philosophy and post-colonial criticism.

The description of the nature of film production structures and sponsorship policies of anglophone and francophone African countries and their impact on post-colonial film production in Africa is extensive and thorough, but given that the ambitious scope of the volume sets up the expectation that it will deal

with the cinematic practices in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, the omission of Lusophone African filmmaking is somewhat disappointing. Since Shaka delineates cinematic patterns according to the divergent colonial policies of British association versus French assimilation, the inclusion of Portuguese colonialist policies and their influence on cinematic institutions could have provided fascinating additional insights.

Shaka draws a useful and well-argued distinction between *colonial instructional* cinema and *colonialist* cinema – a differentiation previously ignored in theoretical writings – and substantiates this distinction through comprehensive analyses of selected films representative of the two divergent discursive practices. However, the main strength of this study lies in the excellent critical readings of two films that engage in the practice of *colonialist counter-discourse* – Med Hondo's *Sarraounia* and Ousmane Sembene and Thierno Faty Sow's *Camp de Thiaroye*. Although all of his film analyses are well-grounded theoretically and critically, the reader cannot help but conclude that the intellectual and creative heritage of films from the colonial instructional and colonialist discourses are really of marginal importance to current filmmaking on the continent, and is left in want of more critical readings of post-colonial African films, since these are the cultural products that ultimately define modernity through African cinema today.

LIZELLE BISSCHOFF
University of Stirling

Prospects for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Africa's Horn

edited by GUNNAR M. SØRBØ and SIEGFRIED PAUSEWANG

Bergen Norway: Fagbokforlaget, 2004. Pp. 168, 249 Kr (pbk.).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06281965

The Horn of Africa remains one of the most politically and socially volatile regions of the world. Despite some recent progress toward a political settlement in the Sudan, every country in the Horn faces a myriad of political challenges and fragilities – and most have little prospect of peaceful resolution in the near future. This collection of essays by well-known scholars and activists from the region and the North, addresses peace, human rights, and security challenges in the area. The volume stems from a 2003 symposium held in Bergen, Norway in honour of exiled Eritrean activist and lawyer, Paulos Tsefargiorgis, on the occasion of his receiving the Rafto Prize for human rights. Mr Tsefargiorgis is the first sub-Saharan African to be given this prestigious award, and he remains a tireless advocate of democracy and human rights, and a strong critic of the current Eritrean regime.

The chapters present both case studies on the Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well as region-based essays on a number of related themes. In the regional chapters, de Waal addresses the profound challenges that poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic hold for lasting peace, while Salih shows how political resistance movements and military coups in the region have rarely led to meaningful democratic transitions in the Horn. Both pieces demonstrate the importance of understanding the historical depth of the region's political and security concerns. The chapters by Tsefargiorgis and Tronvoll both address the causes and consequences of the Ethio-Eritrean war, a tragic conflict that has bewildered

many Africanist scholars. By exploring the internal causes of the war, Tsefagiorgis shows how Meles Zenawi (Ethiopia) and Issias Afewerki (Eritrea) were able to exploit historical tensions and rivalries between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) to foster domestic support. Tronvoll, on the other hand, argues that the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) and United Nations peace negotiators misunderstood the war's historical and domestic political contexts, and thus have not created a sustainable peace.

In the chapter on Somalia, the nation which has been without a government for the past 14 years, Menkhaus addresses some of the nuanced political developments that have occurred since the 1990s, including an increased political role for businessmen. Pausewang, in turn, shows how the Ethiopian government's heavy-handed administrative and land allocation systems have fostered a docile peasantry, which has blindly supported the ruling party in recent elections for fear of retribution. In another chapter on Ethiopia, Mjaaland shows that despite the critical role that women played in the country's liberation movements, their social and economic status have improved very little under a government that they helped to install. Finally, in chapters on the Sudan and Eritrea, Manger shows how Islamism and Arabism are closely related and have been invoked by successive Sudanese governments to politically oppress minority groups; while Tsefagiorgis suggests actions to reform the undemocratic regime in Eritrea, including ways that pressure can be put on the government to dialogue with opposition parties and to address Ethiopia's territorial concerns and interests. Overall the co-editors have assembled an interesting and important set of papers that provide a realistic assessment of the Horn's political challenges and the reforms that might restore peace and respect for human rights in the region.

PETER D. LITTLE
University of Kentucky

Strangers, Spirits and Land Reforms: conflicts about land in Dande, northern Zimbabwe by MARJA J. SPIERENBURG

Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2004. Pp. 255, US\$39.00.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06291961

In the context of Zimbabwe's recent, far-reaching, and still very much understudied, land reform, there is no doubt that Marja Spierenburg's contribution is very timely. Of course the subject of her book is not the 'fast track' land reform programme that appeared on the scene so dramatically in 2000, but an earlier and different land reform effort, in the form of the Mid-Zambezi Rural Development Project, which took place in a communal area of northern Zimbabwe known as the Dande, where David Lan did research for his influential book *Guns and Rain* (1985).

Based on lengthy stretches of fieldwork dating back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, the book's main focus is on the conflicts over land which emerged as a result of the disastrous implementation of the Mid-Zambezi project. She shows convincingly how colonial assumptions about African land use practices, the

'land degradation narrative', and landscape of the Dande itself, persisted after independence, as the government moved away from redistribution of the white commercial farming areas towards internal 'land use reforms' in communal areas. Tracing the history of the project from its often blatantly wrong initial assumptions about the existing population in the area, she explores how official efforts to implement the flawed project effected the lives of both 'autochthons' and migrants to the area, and how people responded and resisted through appealing to the spirit mediums, and the ancestors themselves. Exploring not only the Mid-Zambezi project but also two subsequent irrigation projects in the area, Spierenburg paints a picture of a layered landscape inflicted by a series of confused and contradictory development projects instigated by different government departments and international donors who often seemed unaware not only of the complex livelihood strategies of people already there, but also of other existing projects.

She brings out some of the complexities of local government institutions and authority, and the tensions between government employees, local councillors and 'traditional' leaders in the form of chiefs, headmen and spirit mediums. In particular, she describes the nuanced and complex strategies of recent migrants to the area before the implementation of the project, who variously approached Village Development Committees, councillors and headmen in their applications for land. Discussing the long history of migration into the Dande, as well as the high mobility of so-called 'autochthons', she suggests that mobility and migration are both 'a key feature of life in Dande' (p. 82). Before the implementation of the project, village headman and chiefs were actively encouraging land-hungry settlers from other parts of Zimbabwe, including farm workers (and here her work ties in very nicely with Blair Rutherford's important research (2001) on that subject) to come and settle in the area. They were invited in and incorporated into the *mhondoro* cult in a way which demonstrates that membership of the cult is based not just on *linearity* but also *territoriality* (p. 150). In-migration and mobility appear in the myths of the founding ancestors of the area, revealing how 'spirit provinces' and the 'concept of territoriality' paradoxically both substantiate ancestral claims to land and authority by 'autochthonous' clans but, also 'allows for mobility, for flexibility in membership of the cult and the incorporation of migrants' (p. 199). As a result of the skewed land resettlement project, however, tensions between 'migrants' and 'autochthons' mounted, and disputes over the identity of settlers became increasingly salient. While spirit mediums resisted the implementation of the project by forwarding a powerful 'counter-narrative to the land degradation narrative' (p. 225), they kept a greater distance from such 'internal' disputes which were more often articulated in terms of witchcraft threats and accusations.

Marja Spierenburg has produced an important book which will be of great use to academics and others trying to get a grip on the complexity of Zimbabwe's more recent land reform. She has a sophisticated understanding of the role of *mhondoro* cults in contemporary Dande, but presents her arguments in a way which is both accessible and provocative. Her argument about the role of adherents in the pronouncements of spirit mediums possessed by ancestral spirits provides an appropriate tempering of some of the structuralist excesses of David Lan's book, and she makes a similar contribution to ongoing debates

about the ambiguous 'modernity' of witchcraft in post-colonial Africa (p. 199). She is a forgiving writer, but sometimes frustratingly so. There are too many 'signposts' in the text, which is sometimes a little slow, laboured and repetitive as a result. But while this suggests a more thorough editing may have produced a more 'efficient' read, it does not detract seriously from the significance of this work.

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